

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 JOHANN 01216 151415Z  
ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08 INR-10  
LAB-04 NSAE-00 SIL-01 HA-05 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01  
L-03 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 TRSE-00  
( ISO ) W

-----105370 151559Z /47

R 151010Z MAY 78  
FM AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7665  
INFO AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN  
AMCONSUL DURBAN  
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA  
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L JOHANNESBURG 1216

CAPE TOWN ALSO FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PLAB, SF, US  
SUBJECT: STRIKE AT CHRYSLER PLANT: CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES

1. SUMMARY: A WILDCAT STRIKE AT SIGMA MOTORS, WHICH IS ASSOCIATED WITH THE U.S. MULTINATIONAL CHRYSLER MOTORS, HAS BEEN VARIOUSLY ATTRIBUTED TO POLITICAL ACTIVISTS, TEETHING PROBLEMS WITH THE IN-COMPANY LIAISON COMMITTEE AND TRADE UNION AGITATION. AS A RESULT OF THE STRIKE, THE SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE HAVE INCREASED THEIR SURVEILLANCE OF BLACK TRADE UNIONS AND THE UNIONS CONCERNED HAVE STEPPED UP THEIR ORGANIZ-  
ING ACTIVITIES. END SMMARY.

2. APPROXIMATELY 1500 BLACK AND COLORED WORKERS - THE ENTIRE NON-WHITE LABOR FORCE - DOWNED TOOLS AT SIGMA MOTORS (24 PERCENT CHRYSLER, 76 PERCENT ANGLO-AMERICAN OWNED) ON MAY 1. THE WORK STOPPAGE LASTED  
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 JOHANN 01216 151415Z

48 HOURS AND WAS PUBLICLY ATTRIBUTED TO THE FRUSTRATION OF THE COMPANY LIAISON COMMITTEE OVER LACK OF PROGRESS IN WAGE NEGOTIATIONS. ACCORDING TO TIME BUREAU CHIEF BILL MCWHIRTER, THE SIGMA STRIKE WAS, IN FACT, POLITI-  
CALLY INSPIRED, NOT ECONOMIC. MCWHIRTER SAID THE WORKERS AT SIGMA WERE INTIMIDATED BY YOUNG BLACK POLITI-  
CAL ACTIVISTS WHO ARE NOT EVEN EMPLOYEES OF SIGMA. THEIR

PURPOSE WAS TO DEMONSTRATE THEIR MUSCLE IN THE WORK ENVIRONMENT, AS WELL AS THE BLACK TOWNSHIPS.

3. SIGMA CONTINUES TO CLAIM, HOWEVER, THAT THE STRIKE WAS CAUSED BY "TEETHING PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH MANAGEMENT'S EFFORTS TO INTRODUCE BILATERAL WAGE NEGOTIATIONS" WITH BLACK WORKERS THROUGH THE LIAISON COMMITTEE SYSTEM. BLACK TRADE UNION SOURCES INDICATE SPECIAL BRANCH AGENTS HAVE, DURING THE PAST TWO WEEKS, BEEN WARNING COMPANIES IN THE PRETORIA-JOHANNESBURG AREA OF THE POSSIBILITY OF FURTHER STRIKE ACTIONS AT OTHER PLANTS INSPIRED BY TRADE UNIONS.

4. IN THE MEANTIME, THE TWO UNIONS INVOLVED AT SIGMA MOTORS, THE NATIONAL UNION OF MOTOR ASSEMBLY WORKERS (COLORED) AND THE UNITED AUTO AND RUBBER WORKERS (BLACK) HAVE TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF THE SITUATION TO INCREASE THEIR MEMBERSHIP DRIVE. THEY HAVE OBTAINED A COMMITMENT FROM SIGMA MANAGEMENT TO REORGANIZE BOTH UNIONS WHEN A MAJORITY OF THE WORKERS ARE SIGNED UP. THE KEY TO SUCCESS IS THE UARW SINCE MOST SIGMA WORKERS ARE BLACK. UARW HAS SIGNED UP 250 WORKERS AND WILL APPROACH MANAGEMENT FOR FORMAL RECOGNITION WHEN THEIR TARGET OF 700 IS ACHIEVED.

5. COMMENT: WHILE PREFERING NOT TO DEAL WITH BLACK  
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 JOHANN 01216 151415Z

UNIONS, SIGNMA MANAGEMENT IS COMMITTED TO THE OVERALL ANGLO-AMERICAN POLICY OF MOVING TOWARD EQUAL TRADE UNION RIGHTS FOR ALL WORKERS IN SOUTH AFRICA. UNLIKE THE SPECIAL BRANCH, THEY PROBABLY ALSO SEE DEFINITE ADVANTAGES IN THE ENVIRONMENT WHERE A RESPONSIBLE TRADE UNION FORCE IS PRESENT TO COUNTER POLITICAL INTIMIDATION.  
JOHNSON

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 jan 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** SECURITY, LABOR STRIKES  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 15 may 1978  
**Decaption Date:** 01 jan 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 20 Mar 2014  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1978JOHANN01216  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Expiration:**  
**Film Number:** D780205-0450  
**Format:** TEL  
**From:** JOHANNESBURG  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Image Path:**  
**ISecure:** 1  
**Legacy Key:** link1978/newtext/t19780559/aaaabxzu.tel  
**Line Count:** 102  
**Litigation Code IDs:**  
**Litigation Codes:**  
**Litigation History:**  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Message ID:** 258b1c9f-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc  
**Office:** ACTION AF  
**Original Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 2  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** n/a  
**Retention:** 0  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 26 jul 2005  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**SAS ID:** 2691523  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** STRIKE AT CHRYSLER PLANT: CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES  
**TAGS:** ELAB, SF, US, CRYSLER MOTORS  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**vdkgvwkey:** odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS\_Docs/258b1c9f-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc  
**Review Markings:**  
Sheryl P. Walter  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
20 Mar 2014  
**Markings:** Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014